

CONFRONTING THE GLOBAL FRONTIER: THE PROMOTION OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AS A CHALLENGE TO THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

The paper analyzes the role of democracy promotion in the evolution of US foreign policy after the Cold War. Since the years of East-West rivalry the ideology of liberal internationalism and Americanism remains an important element of the U.S. foreign agenda. In the new era, the promotion of the Western socio-political system, based on liberal democracy, human rights and market economy, was presented as a way to sustain global stability and to prevent the dissolution of international community. After the collapse of bipolar system the concept of US hegemony, justified in terms of democratic globalism, caused serious rows and fears of unleashed American interventionism. Increasing tensions between the aims of US hegemonic foreign policy, followed by military interventions, and its international and regional perception, is discussed in reference to the concept of a global frontier-land introduced by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman and F.J. Turner's concept of the American frontier. Another perspective links the matter of the "frontiers" of American influence with a Global Balkans, described by Zbigniew Brzezinski as a divided and unstable area of the Middle East and Central Asia. The vision of liberal *Pax Americana* and an enlarged zone of democratic peace that was supposed to solve the problem of "failed states" and "rogue regimes," appeared to reach beyond US capabilities, as the failed Bush Jr.'s "democratic crusade" led to further destabilization in the Broader Middle East.

Introduction

The following paper aims to investigate the role of democracy promotion as a manifestation of liberal internationalism and Americanism in the evolution of US foreign policy after the Cold War. In the era of globalization, the ideology of Americanism, based on the enlightenment concept of America as a model for other countries, has become an increasingly important factor in the US foreign-policy making process. *Ideologia Americana* may be perceived as a pillar of American imperialism or a force that drives the United States and other parts of the world into new stages of development. As Tomasz Żyro noted, the consolidation of *Pax Americana* requires establishing *limes*, a frontier line of American political influence (Żyro 2002, 7).

In the debate on US foreign policy, the matter of the “frontiers” of American influence is being linked with a Global Balkans, described by Zbigniew Brzezinski as a diverse, divided and unstable area of the Middle East and Central Asia, that pose a threat of Balkanization of global politics. The challenge of a Global Balkans has become a test to the competing unilateral and multilateral visions of US policy. Brzezinski stated that the unsuccessful American interventions in this region are to a large extent a result of failed democracy promotion policy conducted by the Bush Jr. Administration (Brzezinski 2008, 131).

Currently it appears that the unilateral visions of American hegemony and attempts to use military force in order to promote Americanism have led to tragic effects, as well as the projects of state-building and supporting democracy in the Middle East. A question remains of whether the concept of promoting American-style democracy abroad was one of the reasons for the growing unilateralism of United States policy and abandoning multilateralism in favor of American hegemony, or should it be regarded rather as an American attempt to confront the challenges of the post-Cold-War era?

A global wild West? Americanism and its frontier after September 11th

With the end of the Cold War the United States faced a new international environment in which America as the only superpower attempted to play a hegemonic role of undisputed leader of the global community, imposing its own norms, standards and political values. The tension between the American view of its role in global affairs and a broader context of US foreign policy might be presented in reference to F.J. Turner's concept of the American frontier and the concept of a global frontier-land introduced by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis emphasized the influence of the old Western frontier on American political and social evolution as well as on the institutions of the United States, including democracy. What's significant is that Turner claimed that the frontier experience contributed to a faster Americanization of European settlers and enabled the growth of American democracy. According to Turner, the westward movement and expansion of the United States beyond its current frontier was connected with the growth of grassroots democracy, whereas the challenge of building new states of the Union required a bottom-up approach and therefore strengthened democratic institutions. The struggle with the frontier influenced East-coast establishment and European countries contributing to the promotion of American democracy abroad (Turner 1985, 244–255). Turner stated that “the most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe” (Turner 1985, 30).

Turner's concept, referring to the era of America's territorial growth and intensive state-building in the West, opened a vivid discussion on the further expansion of the United States after the old Frontier ceased to exist. At the beginning of the 21st century, as Zygmunt Bauman claims, the entire global community shares the fate of the frontiersmen, being directly or indirectly influenced by Americanism (Bauman 2006, 104–108). Bauman's global frontier-land is an area of instability, disorder and conflicts

on the verge of Western civilization, without clear geographic borders. The concept of the global frontier-land reflects the profound changes caused by globalization and its side-effects. Global space has become a frontier-land as a result of the flow of people, skills and conflicts. High speed exchange of information, faster communication and global networks have produced an environment in which security cannot be provided by building walls or by dividing one geographic area from another. Civilizations mix with each other within cities and neighborhoods. Conflicts cannot be solved by capturing enemy territory while enemies operate beyond the territorial dimension of space (Bauman 2006, 104–108).

Since the end of the Cold War the influence of globalization, combined with erosion of the institutions of nation-state and international norms, has broadened the frontier-land, making it impossible to draw clear borders for a 'secure area.' In Bauman's vision, September 11th might be considered as a 'symbolic end of the era of space,' while guarded territory is no longer equivalent with security. September 11th proved that nobody can separate himself from the unstable 'space of flows,' which remains beyond political control and the traditional meaning of territory. As Bauman states, after September 11th it became obvious that even remote countries in a state of anarchy cannot remain in a liquid space, because their fragility poses a threat of global disorder (Bauman 2006, 104–107).

The visions of hegemony: liberal *Pax Americana* versus Global Balkans

Henry Kissinger noted that after the end of the Cold War the Westphalian system, based on the doctrine of sovereignty and the priority of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries, entered its final stages (Kissinger 2002, 21–22). The concept of universal humanitarian intervention and universal jurisdiction, partly embraced by the Clinton Administration, might be perceived as a manifestation of abandonment of the traditional understanding of the sovereign nation-state. Since the early 1990s the United States has been gradually moving away from the concept of balance of powers, heading towards the idea of implementing its own norms – including liberal democracy. Wilsonian ideals has become predominant in transatlantic relations, leading towards visions of replacing the ineffective UN with a US-led alliance based on NATO, as a more reliable peacekeeper and guardian of international order (Kissinger 2002, 25, 43–45).

The nature of the post-Cold-War international environment has forced the American Administration to find new instruments for implementing its foreign policy and combining national goals with a broader global vision. US foreign policy has attempted to face new challenges in the frameworks of American leadership and American hegemony. The competing visions of post-Cold-War US foreign policy, unilateralism and multilateralism, might be discussed in the context of neoconservative concepts of "benevolent hegemony" and more realist, multilateral concepts of American preponderance in a multipolar global system. The neoconservatives, Ch. Krauthammer, J. Muravchik, P. Wolfowitz, R. Kagan and others, have made an attempt to combine Wil-

sonism, realism and globalism in a vision of United States as hegemonic superpower, peacekeeper, and leader of an international order based on liberal values. Liberal *Pax Americana* was supposed to fill the vacuum created by the fall of the Eastern bloc, by enlarging the Western zone of democratic peace. For the neoconservatives, American benevolent hegemony was necessary to stabilize the global system, while the spread of the liberal-democratic order was supposed to secure US interests in strategic regions, allowing America to consume the fruits of peace. In the neoconservative mind, promotion of democracy legitimized American hegemony in the unipolar world, showing the universal dimension of American values (Krauthammer 1990–1991, 23–33).

Since the early 1990s, American hegemonic ambitions have been justified by the dangers of globalization and the fragility of the new international order after the collapse of the bipolar system. In fact, the dissolution of the Eastern bloc and the Soviet sphere of influence left many areas beyond the reach of international regulations. The war in the Persian Gulf in 1990 revealed the threats caused by states violating the international order – “rogue regimes” – especially those equipped with weapons of mass destruction. US national security strategy and defense policy after containment defined the US as a protector of a “democratic zone of peace” from authoritarian states aspiring to regional hegemony (Christopher 1998, 17–34).

The concepts of post-Cold-War US foreign policy embraced various means of reducing the threats of global Balkanization, destabilization caused by ethnic and religious conflicts leading to wars and the collapse of entire states. Brzezinski perceived the problem of Balkanization in a geographical perspective; his concepts of Eurasian Balkans or Global Balkans referred to the unstable area of Central Asia and the Middle East, where the interests of great powers clash and local conflicts might easily turn into broader crises (Brzezinski 2005, 42). Zygmunt Bauman saw the causes of Balkanization of the globe in the political fragmentation of the international system, and in the erosion of the UN and nation-states. Nation-states have spread but they are weakening, Bauman claimed (Bauman 2006, 96).

One of the proposed solutions to prevent the dissolution of the international community was the promotion of a Western socio-political system, based on liberal democracy, human rights and a market economy. The first Clinton administration made an attempt to raise democracy promotion to the rank of guiding principle of US foreign policy in order to provide a clear framework that could stabilize the evolution of post-communist countries and the developing world (Cox 2000, 221–234). As early as in 1994 it became clear that this concept could not gain sufficient support in American public opinion, which was frightened by the consequences of failed intervention in Somalia and the case of Haiti. The concept of humanitarian interventions proposed by Albright and Clinton brought America closer to the role of global sheriff, protecting liberal values. Nevertheless, ambitious claims of bringing liberal-democratic order to the former Soviet Union revealed the limits of American soft power and the influence of Americanism. The failures of liberal forces in Russia, Belarus, Central Asia and the Caucasus proved that US foreign-policy makers underestimated the significance of cultural and religious factors that could hamper the expected inevitability of liberalization and democratization (Pridham 2001, 65–94).

The second Clinton Administration was gradually moving away from “assertive multilateralism” based on US cooperation with international institutions toward the politics of US hegemonic and unilateral leadership proposed by neoconservatives from the republican camp, gathered in the influential lobby Project for the New American Century (Tokarski 2006, 65). An example of this shift can be observed in the US military interventions in the 1990s. The American administration step by step reduced its dependence on the UN, building its own international coalitions to provide legitimization for military actions. In the context of the neoconservative vision of “benevolent hegemony,” the NATO operation in Kosovo can be perceived as an important step towards unilateral *Pax Americana* implemented by US military force (Waldenberg 2005, 351–358).

The democratic crusade of G.W. Bush: a costly fiasco?

The views of American democracy promotion during the years of the Bush Jr. Administration refer in most cases to the occupation of Iraq, which could be better explained through the prism of the “war on terror” doctrine than within a liberal-internationalist framework. Nevertheless, the significance of democracy promotion in Bush Jr.’s policy may be linked with a broader strategy of neutralizing radical Muslim movements by stimulating liberalization in the Middle East. The Bush Administration perceived the terrorist threat as a result of the backwardness of Muslim countries, including lack of democracy and liberal values. Consequently, with the support of the neoconservative circle, Wilsonian rhetoric evolved into a vision of supporting liberalization in the Middle East through the forced democratization of Iraq (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007, 233–243).

The early months of the second Administration of Bush Jr. brought the culmination of the policy of upgrading liberal-internationalism in the US foreign policy agenda. In the second inaugural address of January, 2005, Bush Jr. declared that “it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world” (Bush 2005). The US National Security Strategy of 2006, largely based on liberal-internationalism, declared that “fighting tyranny” and “supporting democratic movements worldwide” had become a primary goal of US foreign policy (NSS 2006, 1–7).

The implementation of this “freedom agenda” was supposed to be based on the combined apparatus of foreign service and foreign aid. Condoleezza Rice declared that the State Department should support democratization through ‘transformational diplomacy’ encouraging other countries towards democratic change (Rice 2005). In the framework of ‘transformation development’ US federal agencies, including the new Millennium Challenge Corporation, were supposed to accelerate the transformation of developing countries into liberal democracies. According to USAID’s document ‘At Freedom’s Frontiers’ in 2005 the agency was implementing the presidential freedom agenda by donations and programs, which cost circa 1.2 billion dollars (USAID 2005).

The visions of the Bush Administration of turning Muslim societies into modern liberal states had to be confronted with reality after the explosion of internal conflicts in Iraq and the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections in January, 2006, which

were a reminder of the inconsistencies and limitations of American democracy promotion. As Z. Brzezinski pointed out, the concept of “exporting” democracy to Muslim societies where individual rights were not respected might escalate brutal conflicts and destabilize entire regions. According to Brzezinski, the failures of the Bush Administration in a Global Balkans, symbolized by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, were to a large extent a result of unwisely conducted democracy promotion policy, combined with Americanism and messianism (Brzezinski 2008, 130–132).

In the views of other critics, such as Noam Chomsky, the Bush Jr. Administration attempted to use democracy promotion first of all in order to legitimize neoconservative claims to hegemonic leadership and the unilateral doctrine of preemptive war. The liberal-internationalist rhetoric and Wilsonian slogans were supposed to present American military interventions as a legitimate use of force, justified by noble goals, such as protecting the international community from rogue regimes, fighting tyranny and spreading democracy. The use of Wilsonian ideology in the context of operations in Iraq helped the Bush Administration to explain its goals in the Middle East when previous claims on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been undermined (Chomsky 2005, 145–147).

Zygmunt Bauman accused G.W. Bush’s Administration of enlarging the global frontier-land by unilateral military actions conducted in a manner that weakened international institutions. In Bauman’s view, Bush Jr. introduced a tactic of violating agreements and avoiding long-term obligations, which was temporarily convenient for the stronger party, the United States. Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz implemented a neoconservative strategy of transforming the global space into a frontier-land, by forming changing, liquid coalitions and warmongering. As the case of Afghanistan seems to prove, the nature of the global frontier-land makes it impossible to win a war against terrorists without reorganizing the entire global space. The strategy of building coalitions based on short-term interests without institutionalized structures authorized to implement necessary regulations made it more difficult to replace the global frontier-land with a stable international system (Bauman 2006, 49, 108–110).

In Bauman’s view, the strategy of Bush Jr.’s Administration supported global disorder and indirectly helped terrorists to undermine the efforts to build democratically controlled institutions for the entire international community. In this perspective, interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq might be perceived as “reconnaissance wars” – typical operations in the global frontier-land, waged before a strategy was formed. The consolidation of global legal and political structures cannot be achieved with rapid military actions; while we all live in the global frontier-land, institutions based on democratic mechanisms are necessary to provide basic elements of global governance and to secure the rights of the victims of disorder – Bauman stated (Bauman 2006, 108–113).

Conclusion

Since the years of the Clinton Administration, US democracy promotion has been criticized as an imperialist concept, a threat to global cultural diversity, or a symbol of domination of the developed North over the developing South (Robinson 2009,

315–325). The American failures in Iraq illustrate the dangers of using democracy and *Ideologia Americana* in support of interventionist foreign policy. However, the end of Bush Jr.'s democratic crusade does not end the debate on the US's role in the processes of democratization and liberalization abroad. The illusions of democratic imperialism collapsed before they were put into practice, but the issue of supporting democratization remains an important element of multilateral efforts to secure universal values and standards (CSIS 2009).

If we follow Bauman's view that the West cannot build a new Hadrian wall and global institutions based on democratic control are necessary to confront the current global challenges, then the United States and other powers are obliged to promote and support democracy globally. Despite the fallacies of Bush Jr., the Obama Administration still has to face the question of whether democracy promotion might be combined with a realist policy of national interest and what rank should be given to democracy in US national security strategy (Haass, Indyk 2009). To be sure, if democracy is one of the most powerful weapons in the US arsenal, as Joe Biden declared during the February conference in Munich, this weapon cannot be effectively used by a single 'crusader state,' but on the basis of multilateral consensus and with the support of American soft power (Biden 2009).

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